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[ Strachan, John (1798-1867) ]

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## DIOCESAN SYNOD.

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### PETITION TO THE QUEEN

AND LETTER TO

HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

TORONTO, 1851.

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## PETITION.

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TO THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY :

We, your Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Bishop and Clergy and Laity of the Diocese of Toronto in the Province of Canada, in Conference assembled, at a Visitation holden by the Lord Bishop of Toronto, in the City of Toronto, on the first and second days of May, 1851—the Laity being composed of two delegates chosen by the members of the Church of England, who are communicants, from each Parish or Mission within the said Diocese—beg leave most humbly to represent to your Majesty—

That your Petitioners are deeply affected with the importance of promoting more effectually than can be done under any existing powers connected with the constitution of the Church in this Colony, the exercise of the discipline of the Church, and the more advantageous management of its temporal affairs ;

That the lay members of the Church in this Diocese now number more than two hundred thousand souls, and the Clergy one hundred and fifty, scattered over a vast extent of country, and much separated from one another ; and that on this account the difficulties of Episcopal supervision are much increased, as well as of the carrying out those regulations of discipline with which the best welfare of the Church is so intimately associated ;

That the Bishop of the Diocese, besides the difficulty thus arising from the remoteness and distance apart of Parishes and Clergy, has no adequate power by which to

try cases of insubordination, offences against morality, or aggravated neglect of duty, where such may unhappily occur amongst his Clergy ;

That in acting in accordance with his Episcopal commission and prerogative, and in reliance upon his individual judgment, with the aid of such counsel as he may be able to command, his decisions are liable to misconstruction, being subject, if gentle and indulgent, to the charge of irresolution and feebleness, and if manifesting decision and vigour, liable to be denounced as despotic and tyrannical ;

That on such occasions it would much conduce to the removal of existing evils, if the Bishop of the Diocese possessed the support and aid of a constitutional tribunal, composed of certain of the more experienced and judicious of his brethren of the Clergy ;

That in order to effect so desirable an end, and at the same time more efficiently promote the secular interests of the Church, by more fully providing and more advantageously managing the means of its support, your Petitioners would humbly pray that your Majesty would be pleased to authorize the establishment of a Synod or Convocation in this Diocese, to be composed of the Laity as well as the Clergy of the Church therein, in such manner as in the wisdom of your Majesty would best conduce to the advancement of these important objects.

And your Majesty's Petitioners, as in humble duty bound, will ever pray.

On behalf of the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese of Toronto, in Conference assembled.

(Signed)

JOHN TORONTO.

LETTER

FROM

THE LORD BISHOP OF TORONTO,

TO

HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

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TORONTO, CANADA, 7TH JUNE, 1851.

MY LORD ARCHBISHOP,—

I have the honor to enclose a dutiful and loyal Address to our Most Gracious and beloved Queen Victoria, from the Clergy and Laity of this Diocese in Conference assembled, with an humble request that your Grace will be pleased to present the same, and recommend the prayer to Her Majesty's favorable consideration.

There are many questions of great importance to the well-being and discipline of the Church in this Diocese which cannot be satisfactorily settled, without some such constituted authority as we desire, and it is doubtless fitting, because, in accordance with the custom of the Church in her purest ages, that the Bishop should meet and consult with his Clergy upon rules of practice and Ecclesiastical order within the limits of his own Diocese; but not to change or alter, or in any way to interfere, directly, or indirectly, with the Thirty-nine Articles, or the Book of Common Prayer, or with the authorized version of the Holy Scriptures.

In England, the Church has her Ecclesiastical Law, and has been proceeding for centuries in regular and prescribed order—but such law is said not to extend to this Colony, nor



is there any power to modify a single rubric however inapplicable it may be to a new country, or to enforce stricter discipline and greater unity of action.

It must also be recollected, that the Constitution of the mother Church makes no special provision for her Missionary extension in Foreign parts; hence many things are unprovided for, which, in remote Colonies are daily calling the attention of the Bishop or his Clergy, and perplexing them to remedy.

It would, indeed seem, that at the Reformation, the Church and Government were too much occupied with the necessary changes, and the great difficulties and perils with which they were surrounded, to think of contemplating the Church in her Missionary character, and of providing for her gradual establishment and progress in the Colonies and in Pagan lands.

It may indeed be true, that no great inconvenience has yet been felt, but when the lay members of a Diocese in a distant Colony are more than two hundred thousand, and the number of the Clergy one hundred and fifty, it must needs be that difficulties and offences will arise, and how are they to be dealt with?

At such times the Bishop requires the support and refreshing counsel of his brethren, and their constitutional co-operation in devising and applying such remedies as may be deemed necessary or expedient to meet such cases as may have occurred.

Moreover, your Grace will perceive that, situated as the Church now is in this Diocese, the assistance of our lay brethren becomes indispensable, to take order for the temporalities of the Church, and to adopt such measures for her stability and support as may be found most suitable to this new country, and the limited means of our people.

Hitherto, as your Grace well knows, the Missionaries in Canada have been in a great measure supported by the two

great Church Societies—the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, and the Society for Promoting Christian knowledge ; but we are going far beyond their power, however much inclined to afford us adequate help, and the time has arrived when we must look to our local resources and exertions for the maintenance of the Clergy and the extension of the Church.

There has, indeed, been for the last five or six years a local fund arising from the lands set apart in lieu of tithes for the maintenance of a Protestant Clergy, by the special direction of His late Majesty, King George III. of blessed memory, and embodied in the 31st Geo. 3, cap. 31, conferring a constitutional government on the Canadas—but owing to the spread of what are erroneously called, “ Liberal Principles ” in the Colony, and the indifference of the Imperial Government, this resource has been grievously wasted, and the trifling portion which remains has been placed in jeopardy.

Hence both these sources may be considered precarious and of a temporary character. It is true, the two Societies are as generous as they have ever been, or can be, and will doubtless continue to be so to the extent of their ability ; to them we feel under the greatest possible obligations, but they are unable to meet all our increasing wants.

Looking round on all sides we can perceive no adequate help from without, so that we have not ventured to make this humble and dutiful appeal to our Most Gracious Sovereign till compelled by pressing necessity. A Royal License to meet in Synod or Convocation to manage our own affairs, and to take legal measures for the ministrations, extension, and support of our Holy Church in the Diocese of Toronto, seems our only promising resource, and devoutly relying on the Divine blessing, we have a strong faith in its progressive efficiency.

We feel indeed a deep conviction that there is no other way of giving stability and permanence to our branch of the

true Church in Upper Canada, than that which has been sanctioned by the wisdom and practice of the Church Catholic in all former ages.

Permit me to add, that although we deem your Grace the natural and proper channel of communication between the Church of this Diocese and our beloved Queen, nevertheless, to avoid all occasion of offence, we have thought it our duty to request His Excellency the Governor-General, Earl Elgin and Kincardine, to transmit a Copy of our Address to the Right Hon. Earl Grey, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies.

I have the honor to be, my Lord Archbishop,

Your Grace's most obedient humble Servant,

(Signed)

JOHN TORONTO.

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